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Congressional  
Relations  
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~~Chapter II~~  
~~Excerpts~~

Joint Committee

23 SEP 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
SUBJECT: Congressional Relations

1. This memorandum suggests action on the part of the Director of Central Intelligence. Such requested action is contained in paragraph 9.

2. Determining the general view held by the Congress on any particular situation is difficult if not impossible until the question is put to a vote. However, there are sufficient indications of the congressional view of the Agency to warrant concern. I shall discuss some of these but first would like to point out the unusual situation of our Subcommittees.

3. The only formal Subcommittee appointed to consider CIA activities is the "Subcommittee on the Central Intelligence Agency" of House Armed Services. Last year, Mr. Vinson indicated a strong desire to have a monthly meeting and the Agency on its initiative since then has urged that monthly briefings occur. There were six meetings of this Subcommittee last year and there have been four this year.

4. The other House Subcommittee (Appropriations) is not a formally established Subcommittee. Last year we met three times with this Subcommittee and three times this year. The most recent meeting occurred on 27 August 1963 when both the Director and Deputy Director were unavailable. With appropriate notice to Mr. Cannon, a team of senior officials met with the Subcommittee. The entire meeting was devoted to a series of questions by the Chairman based on a Reader's Digest article by Francis Vivian Drake. The discomfiture of several of

the members was obvious as it has been in other meetings. The problems of the chairmanship of this Subcommittee are fully appreciated by Mr. Mahon and Mr. Ford. This subject was discussed by Mr. Mahon with the Director of Central Intelligence early this year. Mr. Ford is out of town for two weeks but I have word that he is seriously concerned that the Subcommittee has not heard from the Agency on a current basis on both Viet-Nam and Cuba and intends to raise this problem with Mr. Mahon and Mr. Cannon when he returns.

5. On the Senate side, there is interlocking membership on the two Subcommittees. Therefore, as a matter of convenience and also, in part because of the increasing disability of Chairman Hayden, Senator Russell has in effect conducted joint meetings for the past three years. There were six such meetings last year and this year there have been two. As a matter of interest there was only one meeting in 1961.

6. These four Committees have perhaps the greatest responsibilities in the Congress and in consequence the Chairmen continuously have weighty problems competing for their attention. In addition, there are many other problems, political and otherwise, which are of concern to these Chairmen. All of this leaves little time for them to devote to CIA. This is notably so in the case of Senator Russell with civil rights legislation, his position on the nuclear test ban treaty and others.

7. The continuing efforts to establish a Joint Committee on Intelligence are reflected in the introduction of seventeen resolutions in this Congress. A rather well-reasoned speech was made by Representative Lindsay on this subject on 15 August 1963, and this contained various factual errors about the Agency which have gone unanswered. There have been other references to the need for a Joint Committee including such Senators as Morse and Smathers. There continue to be press criticisms of the Agency, a recent one for example being The Washington Post editorial of 9 September 1963. None of the members of our Subcommittee has taken to the floor or to the press to state that they are thoroughly briefed on CIA activities

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or to refute the accusations against the Agency. This can be contrasted with frequent favorable reference to the Director by name as head of the Central Intelligence Agency during the course of the floor debate on the nuclear test ban treaty. We have a transcript of a radio interview with Leslie Arends and William Bray who are members of the CIA Subcommittee. They were asked if they knew about the Central Intelligence Agency's role in the Vietnamese situation. They both indicated that they were not briefed on this subject.

8. A sufficient number of unchallenged accusations inevitably will influence members of Congress and thought should be given to some method of countering this continuing barrage. This becomes particularly important in considering the timing of floor action on our early retirement bill. During the Subcommittee hearings, Chairman Rivers several times cautioned that there was a considerable body of antagonism to the Agency in the House. We would not want floor action on the bill to be the occasion for a debate on the merits of numerous accusations or cause renewal of discussion of a Joint Committee. It is recognized that inevitably this will be true to a certain degree. However, we should consider prior action to at least blunt the edge of such an attack. If we are to have any hope of final passage of the early retirement bill this year there will have to be House floor action in the relatively near future in order to provide sufficient time for Senate action.

9. What to do about this problem? The area of possible action appears to be limited to the membership of our Subcommittees who have been given detailed and candid briefings and who are the only members in a position to make a judgment on the over-all performance of the Agency. We believe these members and particularly the senior members sincerely believe the Agency is performing a creditable job despite its difficult task. Therefore, it is to be hoped that they would recognize the necessity for them to speak out occasionally in defense not only of the Agency but also to demonstrate proper discharge of their own responsibilities as members of CIA Subcommittees. The specific action recommended, therefore, is that the Director of Central Intelligence meet privately with members such as Russell, Saltonstall, Vinson and Arends. In the case of House Appropriations, I believe this is a special situation where the Director

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should meet first with Mr. Mahon and seek his advice as to further contacts particularly having in mind bringing Gerald Ford into the matter. The purpose in view of such meetings would be to elicit advice and develop a strategy looking toward public pronouncements by those members and other CIA Subcommittee members. The form of the public statements could be (i) floor statements, (ii) press releases, (iii) press interviews, and (iv) committee reports.

10. In exploring possible content of such pronouncements there could be considered references to detailed briefings on all phases of CIA activities. The usual charges that the Agency is pursuing an independent policy whether South Viet-Nam or elsewhere could be refuted with no damage to security by assurances that this type of thing has been examined and all phases of CIA activities are coordinated and reference could be made to the President's statement on this very subject. Consideration could be given to denying specific accusations; for example, as recently as 16 September 1963, Senator Thurmond in the Congressional Record refers to the Soviet launch of Sputnik I in October 1957 when the U. S. was caught by complete surprise - "official intelligence estimates had let us down again." Possibly at this time the security considerations would be such the true position of Agency estimates could be made public and lay this one to rest for all time. There may be other accusations which have been repeated so often they have become legend which could be laid to rest if the passage of time has lessened the security aspects.

11. To sum up, insofar as we can sense the situation, the reputation of the Agency in the Congress generally seems to be currently on the decline and action along the lines discussed above should be taken. Meanwhile we can do some effective work in our routine contacts with individual Congressmen and such meetings as the group breakfasts are helpful and should be continued.

S/ John S. Warner  
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